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April 28, 2021

Dear REACH Award for Excellence in Research Partnerships Committee,

I am most pleased to represent Options Community Services as a co-nominee with Dr. Nancy Clark for the REACH Award for Excellence in Research Partnerships.

Options Community Services is a non-profit registered charity providing social services primarily in Surrey, Delta, White Rock and Langley. We believe in helping people help themselves. We believe in collaborating with individuals, businesses, community groups and government to create focused, effective and responsive resources for the community.

Options Community Services (OCS) is an accredited agency with COA; this reflects and confirms the commitment to best practices, ethics and client service shared among OCS staff. It also reflects a commitment to quality assurance, quality improvement and continually adapting to meet community needs.

We utilize a comprehensive quality assurance process called Performance Quality Improvement (PQI). We monitor and measure many things including:

- Our inclusiveness and our ability to provide barrier-free services to all of the people of our community.
- Our health and safety efforts to ensure that our programs and facilities are clean, safe and able to respond to emergencies.
- Our efficiency, timeliness, and responsiveness. We monitor efficiency in a variety of ways to ensure we are accountable and responsible in our use of funds and resources.
- Our effectiveness; our ability to achieve the outcomes that our programs and services are designed to achieve.
- The satisfaction of our staff and volunteers, our stakeholders, and our many community partners with our services.

Our programs work closely with their clients to set goals and measure progress. We routinely send out satisfaction surveys and questionnaires to personnel, clients and funders. We report these findings on a quarterly basis to our staff, funders and board of directors. We keep the clients and community informed through our annual report, our magazine, our website, media coverage, and newsletters.



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I have known Dr. Clark since 2016 when Options Community Services (OCS) Society and Thompson Rivers University began collaborating with Dr. Clark on a Convening and Collaborating Grant C2, Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) Project: *Supporting Emotional Well-being and Access to Health Care of Syrian Mothers: A Collaboration amongst Community*. This partnership led to developing a community-based research initiative that has enhanced learnings for OCS Early Years Programming; with 'Syrian mothers using community action research to support Syrian refugee mothers in their resettlement. We continue on our learning journey with Dr. Clark on the factors that support our young refugee mothers and children during their early years of integration into Canadian society.

Dr. Clark is also an affiliate researcher with the UBC migration research excellence cluster and is actively engaged in university initiatives which seek to develop stronger community partnerships to support our newcomer immigrant and refugee families in BC. Most recently, Dr. Clark participated in our OCS community-led initiative to learn about our employment and counselling support as well as partnership with the provincial Work BC Services. This has led to an outstanding proposal on 'Exploring Syrian Men's Mental Health and Participation in Labour Employment: A Community Participatory Arts-Based Project' submitted to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Insight Development Grant.

Dr. Clark's research has greatly informed our services and planning which address our specific needs as a service provider of newcomer refugee and vulnerable populations. Some examples of Dr. Clark's outstanding contributions include:

Dr. Clark has developed a peer-led training module with Syrian mothers to develop knowledge and skills about research in Canada; this has empowered our young Syrian mothers to gain new skills such as resume writing, interpersonal communication as well as a better understanding and navigation of the Canadian health care system.

Dr. Clark seeks novel approaches such as Arts based photo voice and storytelling to mobilize knowledge for social action/change and inform our policies and practices to better support our newcomers; most recently, her work has focused on Syrian men who are underrepresented in research and may experience unique challenges during resettlement and labour market integration.



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Dr. Clark's research includes guidelines for peer researchers as a novel approach; mainstream research tends to do research on people and not 'with' people while Dr. Clark's initiatives meaningfully engage and include our newcomers in the research process so that they are empowered to bring their voices to the practices and policies which directly affect them.

Dr. Clark's work centers on informing public policy to understand root causes of challenges experienced by refugee communities to build a more responsive settlement and health care sectors. Her significant body of work and her continued collaborations with the community and community partners help create the necessary transformation for our vulnerable populations.

It is without hesitation that I represent Options Community as a Co-Nominee with Dr. Nancy Clark in this application for a REACH Award for Excellence in Research Partnerships.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Khim Tan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Khim Tan  
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